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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASUNCION 001071

SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO USAID FOR LAC/AA
NSC FOR SUE CRONIN
TREASURY FOR OTA WARFIELD, VAN KOCH, MILLAR
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD DAN JOHNSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/19/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [SNAR](#) [PA](#) [KICC](#)

SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL PLEDGES COOPERATION

Classified By: PolCoun James P. Merz for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. On 8/19, the Ambassador met with Ruben Candia Amarilla, Paraguay's newly elected Attorney General, to stress the importance the U.S. attaches to cooperation with his office in the fight against transnational crime, including drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorist financing, and piracy. Candia pledged his commitment to cooperation with the U.S. and sought our guidance on some personnel questions. Candia was accused by the opposition and in the press of being corrupt and unqualified for the job. Post neither opposed nor endorsed Candia when his candidacy was originally floated. To date, Candia is making positive noises about being responsive on issues we care about. End Summary.

Candia Elected in the Face of Attacks, Rumors

2. (U) On 8/18, the Paraguayan Senate elected Ruben Candia Amarilla by a vote of 28-13 to be Paraguay's next Attorney General replacing Oscar Latorre whose term expires 8/31. His candidacy enjoyed the support of not only the ruling Colorado Party Senators and the members of its multi-party coalition (3 dissident Senators from the opposition Liberal Party, the 2 Senators from the leftist Country in Solidarity Party (PPS), and the one Senator from the left-center National Encounter Party (PN)) but also the votes of the five Senators from National Union of Ethical Citizens Party (UNACE) headed by imprisoned coup-plotter Lino Oviedo. There is already speculation that UNACE negotiated its support for Candia's candidacy in exchange for favorable consideration of outstanding charges and conviction appeals connected to Oviedo. Opposition senators from the Liberal Party and Beloved Fatherland Party (PQ) accused Candia of being both corrupt and unqualified for the job. In the course of his Senate hearing, a PQ Senator introduced a transcript of a tape from the mid-90s allegedly quoting Candia soliciting a bribe as compensation for his assistance in getting charges dropped.

U.S. Courted on Candia's Candidacy

3. (C) In the weeks prior to the 8/18 Senate vote, a number of candidates for the position of Attorney General, including Candia, approached the Ambassador and other Emboffs, seeking U.S. support for their candidacy. It was public information that Candia had once defended a prominent drug trafficker and other criminals. Of course, that is what criminal lawyers do, and Candia claimed he had only handled one part of one narcotic case; he hadn't made that his specialty. Candia's name did not appear in NADDIS, DEA's database. On several occasions, Candia conveyed openness to cooperate fully with the U.S., assuring us that our priorities would be his and requesting suggestions to improve his office, including personnel changes. The Embassy knew that he was President Duarte's first choice and did not want to create a confrontation over his candidacy when we did not have reliable derogatory information on him. We would have preferred a person with no blemishes but all the principal candidates raised doubts one way or the other. In the end, given the considerations noted above, we neither endorsed nor opposed him.

U.S. Establishes Priorities

4. (C) On 8/19, the Ambassador met with Candia stressing the importance we attach to cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General in the fight against transnational crime. The U.S. provides direct technical and material assistance to GOP law enforcement entities to assist them in the investigation of these crimes. Just recently, the U.S. announced a decision to provide Paraguay with an additional USD 324,000 to combat IPR violations of which USD 139,000 was earmarked for the Attorney General's Office. In addition we had provided significant assistance to the Secretariat for

the Prevention of Money Laundering (SEPRELAD) and urged him to work more closely with this institution in building money laundering cases. More assistance to support GOP law enforcement activities could be forthcoming in connection to the Millennium Challenge Threshold program.

15. (C) The Ambassador identified by name several key prosecutors, involved in narcotics and IPR cases, that we would like to see extended. He also conveyed our support for the prosecutors working in the Economic Crimes unit that are vetted by the U.S. It was critical the Attorney General establish internal controls to combat corruption. We urged that he participate in an upcoming seminar hosted by the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) designed to assist Paraguay in identifying priorities in developing a National Security Plan and fostering greater interinstitutional cooperation.

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Candia Pledges Cooperation, Requests Assistance
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16. (C) Candia remarked that he was worried about the scope of the challenges that faced him. He conveyed on repeated occasion his commitment to work closely with us in introducing reforms. He carefully noted the names of prosecutors we support and queried us for our views regarding several prosecutors from CDE long rumored to be corrupt. He shared our concerns about the integrity of the corps of police officials assigned to his office but who do not fall under his direct authority. He wanted our views about the reliability of an informant for confidential information on sensitive cases. He assured us that he was prepared to work closely with SEPRELAD. He explained that he was good friends with the current Attorney General Latorre consulting with him on frequent occasion about the workings of the office. In separate meetings with Emboffs, Candia conveyed his readiness to work with us in advancing key procedural code reform. He also signaled readiness to dedicate a second prosecutor exclusively to drug cases -- an outstanding U.S. request to which his predecessor had not been responsive.

17. (C) Comment. Thus far, Candia has conveyed an unambiguous commitment to cooperation with the U.S. in the advancement of shared priorities combating transnational crime. He has made himself readily available to the Embassy and listened carefully to our requests. Ultimately, his success will ride on his ability to adopt and implement a plan of action to advance effectively these objectives and resist the inevitable political pressure that will come to bear upon him not to effect this kind of change. We will be pro-active in providing early assistance and guidance to cement our relationship and strengthen his ability to address our priorities. We will also urge he travel to the U.S. early on in his term. End Comment.
KEANE